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AMY DAVIS/BALTIMORE SUN

William Keith Pierre, 42, a graduate of the University of Baltimore, turns his back Monday on U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, the university's commencement speaker. "This is a public university and I don't feel like any of her views represent the student body here," he said.

DeVos lauds UB, but speech at commencement draws protests

Some students, faculty voice objections to U.S. education secretary's views

By Talia Richman
The Baltimore Sun

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos applauded University of Baltimore graduates during their winter commencement ceremony Monday and challenged them to be thoughtful and selfless, and to persevere in the face of hardship.

But her address was met with protests by some students and faculty who said they find her views on public education repugnant and who silently turned their backs as she spoke during the ceremony at the Lyric theater.

Several dozen graduates slowly rose in protest as she spoke. First, two women in the front row — including one whose graduation cap read "#Not my commencement speaker" — stood and turned away from DeVos. Soon more graduates and audience members joined their ranks. Multiple graduates raised their fists. One faculty member joined the demonstration from on stage.

DeVos has become a lightning rod in the national debate over "school choice," or allowing families to use public funds to send their children to private schools. DeVos is an advocate of such efforts and says it will create competition for students and help public schools improve. Teachers' unions and other supporters of public education say such allowances take much-needed funding away from public schools.

See **DEVOS,** *page 6*

Judge tosses drug case

Burley conviction had been based on gun task force testimony

By Justin Fenton
The Baltimore Sun

A U.S. District Court judge stepped down from his bench on Monday and apologized to two men who spent years in prison after allegedly having drugs planted on them by an officer charged in the Gun Trace Task Force racketeering case.

Umar Burley was freed from prison in August — seven years into a 15-year sentence — as prosecutors pursued allegations that Baltimore Police Sgt. Wayne Jenkins planted drugs in Burley's car following a deadly high-speed chase in 2010. Jenkins was arrested in March along with the rest of his squad, and charged with robbing citizens and falsifying documents for years.

Umar Burley

On Monday, U.S. District Judge Richard D. Bennett vacated Burley's conviction, as well as the conviction of a second man, Brent Matthews, who served almost four years in prison.

Both Burley and Matthews pleaded guilty. Bennett, who accepted their pleas at the time, said the court takes a deliberate, careful approach when accepting guilty pleas, but "the system still failed."

See **JUDGE,** *page 9*

LLOYD FOX/BALTIMORE SUN

Laura Elstro's Package Rescue in Towson and North Baltimore was inspired by the rise in thefts of packages from homes.

Package theft gives rise to alternatives to home delivery

By Lorraine Mirabella
The Baltimore Sun

Walking her dog through Rodgers Forge one weekday before Thanksgiving, Laura Elstro noticed how many packages had been delivered to her neighbors' front porches.

Remembering complaints she'd heard about the theft of such deliveries, the entrepreneur had an idea — she could turn collecting those parcels for people into a business. "Unfortunately, I thought there is a real need for this," Elstro said.

Her Package Rescue service, launched this month to serve a few Towson and North Baltimore neighborhoods, is among the alternatives cropping up as package theft has become an all-too-common by-product of online shopping and delivery, especially around the holiday season.

Deliveries reach a fever pitch in the weeks leading up to Hanukkah and Christ-

See **PACKAGES,** *page 9*

Towson Row financing gains council approval

Baltimore County will give developers $43M package to aid languishing project

By Pamela Wood
The Baltimore Sun

The Baltimore County Council approved a $43 million assistance package Monday night for the developers of the stalled Towson Row project.

The package was approved 4-3 with Councilman David Marks, who represents Towson, voting against the deal, joined by fellow Republicans Wade Kach and Todd Crandell.

Those voting in favor were council members Vicki Almond, Tom Quirk, Julian Jones and Cathy Bevins, all Democrats.

Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz had proposed the $42.9 million assistance package to be paid over five years in hopes of jump-starting Towson Row. The massive, mixed-use development was first announced in 2013 but after demolition of structures on the building site in 2015, the project has since languished.

The vote means that the project can move forward to final design and permitting, said Brian Gibbons, chairman and CEO of Greenberg Gibbons, an Owings Mills-based development company that was brought in by original developer Caves Valley Partners.

Towson Row would include 1.2 million square feet of developed space — as big as the nearby Towson Town Center Mall — on a 5-acre property on York Road at Towsontown Boulevard.

Current plans call for a 220-room hotel, a

See **TOWSON ROW,** *page 6*

SUMMARY OF THE NEWS

MARYLAND

EVALUATION ORDERED: A Baltimore judge on Monday ordered a mental health evaluation for MauSean Carter, the 30-year-old Baltimore man accused by police of killing two people and wounding several others in a dayslong "shooting spree" that culminated Friday in a dramatic 30-minute car chase. **NEWS PG 2**

NATION

FOREIGN POLICY: President Trump described the U.S. immigration system as a threat to national security on Monday, saying the "wrong people" are being admitted, even as he touched lightly on Russia's menace in a speech coinciding with release of his first comprehensive security strategy paper. **NEWS PG 6**

TODAY'S WEATHER

PARTLY SUNNY AND MILD

59 HIGH | **40** LOW

Cooler Wednesday **SPORTS PG 12**

inside

bridge **sports 7** • lottery **news 4** • horoscopes **news 7** • obituaries **news 8** • opinion **news 10**
business **sports 9** • puzzles **sports 7, 11** • tonight on tv **sports 11** • comics **sports 10** • classified **sports 7**